

Secure Commonwealth Outreach Sub Panel

OUTREACH SUB PANEL

SUMMARY TO DATE

Since the Outreach Sub Panel's inception, the members have met several times to discuss and formulate an action plan that would meet the original charge of the Sub Panel. The original purpose and objectives for this Sub Panel are set forth as follows.

Purpose: Conduct activities so that citizens of the Commonwealth are informed of preparedness efforts; are provided the opportunity to provide input to first responders, private leaders, and public policy decision makers; and receive information on self preparedness.

Objectives:

- Develop strategies for presenting successful Secure Commonwealth preparedness activities (such as Best Practices, Lessons Learned, and opportunities for education and training) to first responders, localities, emergency response non-profit organizations, businesses, media outlets and citizens of the Commonwealth.
- Identify opportunities for developing regional forums for citizens and local industry members to provide input to the Secure Commonwealth Panel.
- Ensure that people with disabilities, the elderly, and diverse and underserved populations are integrated into the emergency planning process.
- Facilitate positive working relationships with localities to ensure that a coordinated preparedness process is implemented across the Commonwealth.

Over the past year, the Sub Panel has reviewed the outreach efforts of a variety of agencies and considered methodologies to evaluate the success of those efforts, discussed outlets for communicating to the public, and addressed how to enhance coordination of the various state agencies' preparedness planning with local governments and business/industry. The Sub Panel also has sought to raise awareness on the importance of effective outreach for special needs persons. While much has been done and a great deal of information has been reviewed, it has become apparent that the scope of the objectives may be too broad to support a defined action plan and outcomes.

CURRENT PLAN

For this reason, it is proposed that the Sub Panel should revisit its objectives, and narrows its focus to a few key activities, including (1) promoting cross-agency coordination, (2) supporting local government **regional** initiatives, (3) enhancing communications at all levels, and (4)

monitoring outreach and preparedness efforts for special needs persons. This list of activities is just a starting point for Sub Panel discussions. At the upcoming meeting (9/25), we would want to refine each objective and fully flesh out the activities as well as identify the resources needed to accomplish each activity.

Objectives:

- Cross Agency Coordination – We should make efforts to facilitate inter-agency collaboration, and promote positive working relationships among state agencies and local governments. Task: Develop and implement a plan to enhance cross agency message and preparedness program coordination for statewide delivery to all citizens at the state and local level.
 - Activities may include:
 - Identify all state agencies with preparedness responsibilities, and particularly those agencies serving similar populations, (i.e., the Department of Health, Department of Social Services, Department of Mental Health and the Department of Criminal Justice Services all serve persons in group homes or institutions).
 - Develop a brief survey or questionnaire template for those agencies to respond. Questionnaire answer compilation would produce a report on the monitoring and assessment of achievements and gaps for addressing outreach and preparedness efforts at the state and local level, as well as provide an opportunity to examine where state agency policies may conflict, should be coordinated, etc.
 - Questions to be asked include...
 - What outreach and preparedness activities does each agency undertake as a sole agency? In coordination with the federal government? In coordination with another agency? In coordination with local governments?
 - What preparedness information/activities do they support or offer as a resource to localities? In what format(s)?
 - What preparedness information/activities to they support or offer to citizens? In what format(s)?
- Communication - Develop strategies for presenting successful Secure Commonwealth preparedness activities (such as Best Practices, Lessons Learned, and opportunities for education and training) to first responders, localities, emergency response non-profit organizations, businesses, media outlets and citizens of the Commonwealth.
 - Activities may include:
 - Identify **existing** forums including:
 - Press/TV/Radio/Newspaper – How can we make outreach and preparedness “press-worthy.”
 - Retailer(s) – How can we involve retailers and other business enterprises in outreach and preparedness efforts?
 - Education Conferences

- Local Government Conferences – Is outreach and preparedness on the agenda?
 - Preparedness Campaigns – September is “National Preparedness Month”- What sort of outreach campaigns have been launched to promote awareness? (Also consider Hurricane Season, Tornado, Pan Flu, Tax Sale Day, etc.)
- For each forum identified, establish point of contact, annual timeline and plan to inquire about getting a preparedness presentation or information included on the agenda
- Develop a speakers bureau and list of available materials that can be made available through all communications channels
- Utilize survey techniques for promoting outreach and preparedness, e.g., such as the “informal survey” recently conducted by VDEM to “evaluate citizen awareness and readiness.” (See attached press release, dated August 20, 2008).
- Preparedness for Persons with Special Needs - Ensure that people with disabilities, the elderly, and diverse and underserved populations are integrated into the emergency planning process.
 - Activities may include:
 - Identify all state agencies with monitoring and assessment activities related to persons with special needs.
 - Develop a questionnaire template for those agencies to respond. Questionnaire answer compilation would produce a report on the monitoring and assessment of achievements and gaps for addressing preparedness with persons with disabilities, as well as provide an opportunity to examine where state agency policies may conflict, should be coordinated, etc.
 - Need to address the persons with special needs that are not in institutional care (ie at home, cared for by family, etc) in order not to exclude them from any communication channels developed
 - *NOTE – the template and questionnaire created in Cross Agency Coordination will probably become the model for this objective/activities*

New Business

In addition to the above, the leadership of the Secure Commonwealth Panel has assembled a new Working Group within the Outreach Sub Panel. This Education Working Group will focus its efforts on preparedness in our school systems – What are the gaps? What are the needs? The Education Working Group held its first meeting in early September, and we can expect a report from the Chair at our telephone conference meeting on September 25th.